لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله

إن الدين عند الله الإسلام

THE REVIEW OF RELIGIONS

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Hijrat 1358—May, 1979

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EDITOR

M. G. AHMAD

THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT IN ISLAM

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The Promised Messiah, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, was born in 1836 in Qadian, a village in India. In the eighties of the 19th century, he was called to the office of World Reformer to combat the false Religious Philosophies and to explode the Christian theory of redemption based on the fiction of Christ's death on the Cross and to tell the Christians and Muslims to call off their hope for a second visit from Christ as he had been gathered to his fore-fathers and barred like all mortals from coming back to the world, and that he had come instead as the Promised Messiah.

The Promised Messiah initiated the Ahmadiyya Movement to revive faith in God, challenging rival churches to a spiritual contest to seek Divine sanction for the religion He favoured, through prayer and appeal to Him for guidance and arbitration in the matter, by means of His signs, to re-establish the glory of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, to expound and disseminate spiritual beauties and moral excellences of the teachings of the Holy Quran, to wean men from war-like tendencies and to educate world opinion in favour of renunciation of war as a means of settling disputes, to infuse hope, faith and courage in the drooping hearts of Muslims and all the depressed races and nations of the world, to warn the exploiters, slave-drivers and pedlars in sin against the evil consequences for their evil ways, to collect under one banner all the true followers of Islam and lovers of peace and to inculcate among them the spirit of tolerance, good will and selfless fellow-service and a feeling of true brother-hood.

The Promised Messiah passed away in 1908 and was succeeded by his foremost votary and closest companion, Hazrat Hafiz Haji Hakim Maulvi Noor-ud-Din as Khalifa-tul Masih I. After his death in 1914, the Promised Son of the Promised Messiah, Hazrat Haji Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, was chosen as Khalifa-tul Masih II. During his 52-year long leadership, the Khalifa-tul Masih II organized a world-girdling chain of mosques and missions. On his death on November 8, 1965, the electoral college named with one accord, Sahibzada Hafiz Mirza Nasir Ahmad, Promised Messiah's grandson, Khalifa-tul Masih III.

For further information about the Movement, its activities, aims, objectives and literature, enquiries may be addressed to the nearest Ahmadiyya Mission or direct to :

(For inland correspondents)
NAZIR ISLAH-O-IRSHAD
Sadar Anjuman Ahmadiyya,
Rabwah, Pakistan.

(For foreign correspondents)
SECRETARY
Ahmadiyya Muslim Foreign Missions,
Tehrik-i-Jadid, Rabwah, Pakistan.

THE REVIEW OF RELIGIONS

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF ISLAM

This is an organ of the Ahmadiyya Movement which represents true Islam. It deals with religious, ethical, social and economic questions, Islamic mysticism and current topics. It also provides Book Reviews.

It is open to all for discussing problems vital to the religious and spiritual welfare of man, but it does not give any assurance to publish all articles received by the Editor, nor does it accept responsibility for views expressed by contributors.

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Annual subscription including packing and postage :

1.	Pakistan and Ceylon	... Rs. 15
2.	England aud other sterling areas	... £ 3.
3.	U.S.A. and other doller areas	... $ 3.00

Notes : Cheques and drafts should preferably be drawn on a Pakistani bank. In case a bill or cheque is drawn on a foreign bank, a collection charge of 50 cents for U. S. A. and 25 N.P. for U.K. should be added to the amount of subscription.

CONTENTS

1. Some Observations on the Life of Jesus* ... 121

By R. C. E. Skolfield

2. Jesus—Prophet or God ... 135

By Muhammad Zafrullah Khan

3. The Deliverance of Jesus from the Cross* Quranic and Islamic Evidence ... 152

By Abdus Salam Madsen

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**The papers were read out at the International Conference on Deliverance of Jesus from the Cross held at Commonwealth Institute, London, on 2nd, 3rd, and 4th June, 1978.*

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The Review of Religions

RABWAH, PAKISTAN

Vol. LXXIV May, 1979—Hijrat, 1358 No. 5

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Some Observations on the Life of Jesus

by R. C. E. Skolfield

I am honoured to be speaking here today, in the company of many learned scholars. I am not a scholar, but rather a sceptic. I am not an Ahmadi, but independent and holding to my own views. I am a spiritualist by sympathy and find that its teachings are lofty and understandable, about the Great Spirit whom we call God, of the North American Red Indians, for example. Spiritualist Philosophy is very impressive, and embraces all religions and all men as brothers. It is not like sectarian religion which forms itself into small groups (not altogether undesirable and in many instances praiseworthy) but is all-loving.

I was brought up in the country in a conventional English way in the Christian teaching. My father was a school-teacher and we worked closely with the clergymen who often lived near and took a natural interest in the life of the school. My father

used to play the harmonium for the services on Sundays and my mother was active in social life in the village.

As a child, the christian teaching did not impress me and seemed remote. I imagined Jesus floating around in sky somewhere. The church services appeared rather grim with their emphasis on blood and wounding, threats of hell fire on cold winter mornings and the Great Redeemer in the Sky waiting to penalise me for my sins, with Eternal Damanation.

It was not until the death of my mother that I began to seek out religion and began to wonder if it would have made me a better person. Before this I never really thought about life properly. A friend recommended spiritualism and I went to visit a little church run by an elderly Welshman, who trained plain simple women who often worked in the fields in the surrounding countryside and were the wives of labourers, to be mediums. Through clairvoyance and clairvaudience they gave the most elevating addresses and I was suitably inspired and most impressed, in fact never losing to this day the respect for the genuine, unsophisticated mediums in this Movement. In primitive societies, and I am thinking of the Australian aborigines at this moment, they relied heavily on the mediumship of their women to find water holes in the desert. This is surely the Spirit of God.

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In 1960 I went to Liverpool to work and found lodging with a spinster lady, a staunch christian, who took other lodgers, mainly students at Liverpool University. In this way I met first a Bahai, and went to local meetings with him and became interested in comparative religion, and then an Ahmadi, a doctor's son from Lahore, who gave me lots of books about his beliefs. When he told me he believed that Jesus had been saved from death on the Cross, I was immediately impressed and thought it to be true, so much so that in 1962, when I took my family to Australia, I wrote a book on comparative religion and dealt with this idea of the survival of Jesus, finding indeed confirmation in the Bible.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was the man who had been inspired to say that Jesus had been saved from death on the Cross. We were at last enabled to look at Christianity in a different light. Today I am convinced there was no such thing as the Ascension, one of the pillars of the Faith and dogma. Yet how could this mis-interpretation of the scriptures have arisen?

At the Council of Bishops at Nicaea in 325 AD it was deliberately misinterpreted through self-will, self-interest no doubt, and Bishop Arius was condemned for "heresy", the one who was right in saying that Jesus was a man like any other. Then we had dark ages and the suppression of knowledge, burning of books and so on.

Today we can go into churches up and down the land and find devoted congregations (I was in one at Easter in the heart of the country and the congregation was of such nature that it could have been set there a thousand years ago) having the same age-old beliefs. "What is Truth"? asked Pilate. Indeed we still do not know the truth of a spiritual world, there is no proof, save what we know through inspired persons; and there would be no Faith if we possessed proof. Jesus tried to prove it by his actions. Mankind has made him fail by making him God, so we have had churches split by schisms. Where is the man today who will admit to believing in Angels, Demons and Spirits? (For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel nor spirit but the Pharisees acknowledge them all" Acts 23 : 8).

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad cut through all this prejudice with his insight. A man of the highest courage, he must deserve the highest praise. In 1890 it was not so easy to put your ideas forward in the face of the British Raj and the full might of Victorian Christian dogma, when nowadays famous John Allegro can write a book in which he concludes that Jesus and his disciples were all under the influence of the mushroom drug. (Certainly one could be justified in thinking this of the story of the temptation of Jesus by Satan, when he took him to the top of the mountain).

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Ahmad was another tremendous personality in the illustrious line of prophets. "God does not suffer those who love Him to come to naught," he said. "For all the Apostles I am but a servant, like the humble dust at the door. Every prophet who showed the way of Truth, any day, indeed any time, I would sacrifice my life for that supporter of Truth." He delighted in love of God, a deep devotion to Muhammad, and kindness, sympathy and affection for fellow human beings.

He fulfilled the prophecies of the return of the Messiah or the Christ or the Anointed One to all peoples in a unique way. Being a Persian by race, he was the Promised One of the Zoroastrians; being an Indian by birth, he was the Promised One of the Hindus; being a Muslim by faith, he was the Promised One of the Muslims; and being born under a Christian government, and having defended the honour of Jesus and revealed the location of his tomb, he is entitled to be recognised as the Promised One of the Christians.

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During a long life he set a supreme example of gentle behaviour to his family, his friends and those who bore enmity towards him. When he proclaimed himself the Promised Messiah and gave his life to God he prospered through all things. And he wrote: "A time there was when the usual fare on which I lived consisted of the remains from the table of others. But Lo and Behold, from mine own table now a large number of families get their daily bread."

Ahmad performed miracles of healing by means of prayer. His life was a shining light and an inspiration to all men.

As Jesus had foretold the destruction of Jerusalem nearly 40 years before it happened, Ahmad foretold, nearly 40 years before, in 1906, "Death will make such havoc that streams of blood will flow. Indeed, so great will be destruction on the earth's surface as the world has not witnessed before. Many places will be turned upside down and they will present such scenes of devastation that the world will think they had never been inhabited. All this will be brought about because men

have forsaken God and with all their heart and soul are bent upon the world."

On his death, a Muslim writer said, "Passing through a raging fire of opposition and adverse criticism, Mirza Sahib cleared a path for himself and attained to the highest peak of success." And a Hindu wrote, "To the last moment of his life, Mirza Sahib remained firm in his purpose; in the teeth of opposition from a thousand quarters, he never wavered and never swerved."

Although Ahmad had not been schooled in Arabic, he interpreted the Quran, it is claimed, into its true meaning. He said he had been taught directly through revelation. We find the same example in the Acts of the Apostles, when those noble men were filled with the Holy Spirit "and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." They were accused of being drunk, though as Peter protested it was yet early morning.

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When he was yet unknown and living in the poor town of Qadian, where he was born, God revealed to Ahmad, "I love you. I shall give you a large party of Islam. God will maintain thy name in honour till the world comes to an end and will cause thy message to reach the uttermost corners of the earth. I shall exalt thy name and put thy love into men's hearts. We have sent thee as a blessing and mercy for all people. We have made thee like Jesus, son of Mary." The reference to Jesus is particularly interesting as it was Ahmad who identified the tomb in Srinagar as that of Jesus.

Ahmad comments on the verses in the Quran denying the death of Jesus on the cross: Almighty God says: The Jews neither slew Jesus nor did they crucify him (made him die on the cross) nay they only suspected that Jesus died on the cross; they had not the proof which would have convinced and satisfied them that Jesus (on whom be peace) had really died on the cross. In these verses Almighty God says that although it is true that Jesus was placed on the cross, and they were determined

to kill him, it is wrong for Jews and Christians to suppose that Jesus had really died on the cross; nay, God created circumstances which saved Jesus from an accursed death on the cross.

It was due to the Majesty and Power of God that it become dark, that there was an earthquake, that Pilate's wife saw a vision, that the Sabbath was about to fall when it was unlawful to let the crucified body remain on the cross, and that Pilate, because of the dream of his wife, became inclined to release Jesus. All this was brought about by God to save Jesus. Also Jesus was made to go into a swoon that he might be taken for dead.

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Ahmad says in prayer: "Our beloved Allah, save the Christians from worshipping a man as God and fulfil the promises of Thy prophets for this age. Lift the wounded ones from the thorns. Purify them in the fountain of Thy Salvation which lies only in Thy knowledge and Thy love. There is no salvation in the blood of man. Release them, therefore, from the false dogmas of the crucifixion and the blood of Jesus.

"Almighty God, hear me for their benefit, and enlighten their hearts with heavenly light, so that they may see Thee. Do not destroy them as Thou didst in the days of Noah. Have mercy on them. Open their hearts so that they may accept the Truth."

Jesus shed his blood, as we have seen, to establish the Truth of his words, and therein lies salvation. But salvation, or the eternal life, still has to be earned individually. Today not all Christians believe Jesus was God.

Indeed it is a glorious thing to know Jesus survived; for here is greater proof of God than ever in that God protected him and the prophecies were true. Jesus suffered only because of the faithlessness of the people of his time, not because of God.[1]

1. The Christian saying 'God was put upon the cross' is easier to understand when we contemplate that Jesus was the representative of God, or God's Spirit. Therefore God was put upon the cross.

In believing Jesus died on the cross, only half the story is told, for the prophecy of his survival as shown by the reference to Jonah[1] is not fulfilled. The Spirit of every righteous person may ascend to heaven.

In believing that Jesus ascended in the body to heaven we are only pretending in order to glorify him. But if we see in Jesus a man who set out to find God and worked closely with Him to fulfil the prophecies, thereby proving the existence of God, such a man we can truly glorify ; we can glorify him without reservation.

There are only two possibilites to be considered concerning the mysterious disappearance of Jesus. First, that Jesus died on the cross and afterwards materialised in spirit to his disciples, as Moses and Elijah had appeared to him. Secondly, that Jesus was delivered from his ordeal and appeared to his disciples in person.

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The answer is to be found in his own words. Luke tells us that when Jesus appeared to his disciples they were frightened "and supposed that they saw a Spirit". And he said to them : 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts ? See my hands and my feet, *that it is I myself ;* handle me and see ; for a Spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have."

No statement could be more definite than this ! Jesus is delighted to see his disciples once more and to show them he has survived. And then again, a Spirit would not eat broiled fish (Luke) nor prepare a fire and invite his disciples to "come and have breakfast". (John 21 : 12)

Even our beloved spiritualists have not got it right when

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1. The only sign Jesus gave : a prophecy using the story of Jonah where Jonah emerges alive from his ordeal.

they say that Jesus appeared to his disciples in a materialized body of Spirit, for Jesus himself emphesises that he is not Spirit.

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Furthermore, Matthew and John do not speak of an ascent into heaven. John, the "beloved disciple", would certainly have been the one most likely to write of this, had it been so. And they would all have specified a particular place of ascent, which would have been marked and revered to this day.

Dr. Barnes, when Bishop of Birmingham, wrote in 1947: "(Jesus) came to a criminal's end, whose body quite possibly had been flung ignominiously into a common malefactor's grave". "The Rise of Christianity". In his book "Where did Jesus Die?" (1959), a former Imam of the London Ahmadiyya moque, J. D. Shams, writes: "The cloth in which Jesus was wrapped was found in the sepulchre. This cloth is still in existence. It bears the marks of the body of Jesus made by the ointment which was applied to his body."

A group of German scientists in 1957 published results of their researches into the shroud, in which they proved Jesus was alive when he was taken down from the cross.

It was well known that crucified men lived sometimes for several days, death finally releasing them from their terrible plight in some cases due to starvation and exhaustion, in others to nervous prostration and in others to attacks by birds and wild animals. Herodotus and Josephus recorded cases of men being taken down after several hours and brought back to life.

Jesus was put upon the cross at about nine o'clock in the morning (third watch) and taken down by Joseph of Arimathea and his companions after about six hours. Since Jesus was no weakling but a strong man still youthfull in body, with a strong will, accustomed to hard work and a hard life walking about the countryside, we may understand the surprise of Pilate and the priests when they were told Jesus was dead.

Now let us look at the Crucifixion again : Jesus, without a doubt, chose his own time for the sacrifice, and by driving the money-changers out of the temple drew their wrath upon himself and spurred the chief priests to take action against him at a time when Jews from all parts of the country were in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover.

Afterwards, when Peter accused them, the people wept bitter tears, but their regrets did not turn them from their old ways. If they had a conscience about it, they. soon forgot.

Although man has never forgotten the Crucifixion, he has not ceased to kill, he has not ceased to bear false witness, he nas not ceased to envy and covet his neighbour's belongings. And he never will, for that is the nature of man.

Jesus was a long time praying in the garden, for the disciples had gone to sleep, even Peter. But his decision was made. Then came the soldiers.

That it was necessary for Judas to identify Jesus shows he was of similar appearance to the others. It is said that Judas betrayed him only to get the money for their funds, as he was the treasurer ; for he felt confident that Jesus, who had aways demonstrated such power and command, would easily escape his captors. When this did not happen Judas, Who may have taken it as an instruction—Go and do what you have to do—was so over-come with horror that he went to the Priests, threw the money at their feet and then went out and killed himself.

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Mark tells us that at the ninth hour, or 3 O'clock in the afternoon, Jesus cried out with a loud voice : My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? : and many have said, here was Jesus dying on the cross "disillusioned and defeated", crying out to a God Who he felt had deserted him.

The disciples have certainly left us in a quandary ; if they heard one saying from the cross, surely they would hear the others. But every account is different.

In any event, the saying is excusable, for until one had suffered such pain, one would have no idea how ubearable it could be. The fact that Jesus knew he would survive,* (for he said : the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again ; this charge I have received from my Father**, would not lesson the pain he endured.

Could it be that at the last moment, Jesus had lost faith ; when all through his life he had believed so magnificently ? Surely not ; for Luke tells us the last saying was : Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.

Why did God not cause the cross to be thrown down, and release Jesus ? Why indeed had He allowed him to be nailed there ?

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With a single word He could have thrown down the cross, the executioners and the soldiers and despersed the gaping crowd, writes Daniel-Rope in Jesus in his Time (1945). Why God did not do this is not explained.

Alas, man has been given freedom and free will ; he has been left to his own devices and to do with his life as he pleases. Therefore he must suffer the consequences not only of his own acts but of the acts of others.

We are indebted to Dr. Coodspeed American historian (and others before him) for pointing out to us that Jesus was speaking the words of his forefather David. And no one knew the scriptures better than Jesus.

They are the words of the twenty second psalm, which

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* Earlier, for those who wanted a sign, he had referred to the story of Jonah and the whale (Isaiah, in "The Lord's servant" (53 : 10) says ..... when he makes himself an offering for sin he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days").

** John 10 : 17.

begins : My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning ?

This remarkable prophecy, which may have been written, not in David's time but during the deportation nearly 600 years before Jesus, gives a complete picture of the man on the cross and ends : Posterity shall serve him ; men shall tell of the Lord to the coming generation, and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, that he has wrought it.

Thus was it seen that while Jesus was a son of David, he was yet his Lord.

Indeed, there were theree occasions when Jesus identified himself for posterity, as well as to his own people. The first was in Nazareth, when he quoted Isaiah : The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has appointed me to preach good news to the poor.....[1]

The second was at the hour of his trial in Jerusalem, when he referred to Daniel : and behold with the clouds of heaven, there came one like a son of man[2] and the third was on the cross, when he quoted the first line of the Psalm of David.

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Jesus knew beforehand exactly what he must do to prove he was the promised Messiah. This is what is meant by his sacrifice for us. If people had believed him, it would not have been necessary ; but because men had not believed he had to prove by the Crucifixion that what he told them was the truth, for only then would it be possible to identify him with David's prophecy. As it was already put there in the scriptures Jesus knew he must go through with it to fulfil them.

And now we may all look back to this supreme act of sacrifice and know of a certainty that it is possible for us all

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1. Luke 4 : 18
2. Daniel 7 : 13

to attain to everlasting life through belief in God. Jesus, in effect, died for the truth.*

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Supposing Jesus had been too exhausted to utter this cry? The whole significance of the crucifixion would have been lost to us.

Today the Crucifixion is the symbol of Christianity and an image of Jesus pinned to the cross stands upon the altars of our churches throughout the world. It is a pity; for the supposed death of Jesus on the cross represents one man's fight against the evil of his day and the triumph of his word overcoming the centuries; it also represents his defeat and the triumph of evil over good, of ignorance over knowledge, of sin over virtue. It accuses us, while his deliverance from the cross encourages us and it is for this reason misrepresented and mistaken by so many people of other religions.

Muslims say that every word of the Quran is the Word of God. It is like saying that every word of the Bible is the Word of God, when we know that in the latter there are borrowed teachings, the story of the Flood for example from the Epic of Gilgamesh, and Moses calling upon the Laws of king Hammurabi, who lived some six hundred years previously, for his ten commandments. We cannot write about Jesus without attemping to interpret the writings of St. Paul, without whom Christianity would not have survived.

The apostles' dilemma now becomes obvious, for while knowing the true story they had yet to protect Jesus by remaining silent as to his whereabouts. And they had to preach the gospel of resurrection, as they were charged to do, still with no sign or proof to give to the people. Merely to teach that Jesus had survived the cross in accordance with the prophecies would have been over the heads of the people, for these had known

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* Where is the man who will openly admit today to believing in angels, spirits, demons and evil spirits: THE 'TRUTH OF JESUS'.

other cases of men surviving crucifixion. Thus Paul writes, (1 Corinthians 15:12): Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised, and our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

Indeed the task becomes confusing, and leads to confusion. There may have been originally the idea of "Messianic expectation" in the minds of some of the disciples and they may have carried it to some extent to those they taught. It is apparent that Jesus had another kingdom in mind, the unseen one; and for Paul it is the same. The resurrection too of the body at some future time was not taught by Jesus in the same tradition as the Jewish fathers. Thus Paul writes (2 Corinthians 12:2): I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

We serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit, says Paul (and he did not differ from Jesus in his teaching).

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We wonder whether Paul, knowing as he did the true story of the revival of Jesus and indeed having been taught in person by Jesus for three years, was telling a lie in order to promote the faith (would the world have accepted it without the story of the "dying god" with as much fervour as it finally did)—and was Paul justified in bending the truth or was he being very naughty, as Dr. Hugh Schonfield says of the later Christians who "were compelled to develop doctrines according to the special needs of a pagan environment". Was he writing in an allegorical form?

We should be profoundly disappointed if we were to find Paul to be the least bit dishonest. We are indeed relieved to see the answer to our problem in Romans. I was once alive

apart from the law, he writes, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died;...For sin finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me.

It is therefoae clear for him to write that Jesus had died while still alive!

Whether Jesus actually went to Kashmir after the crucifixion or died and was buried a little while after by the shores of the Dead Sea would certainly be interesting to prove either way. Without proof we must accept the word of the Promised Messiah.

It remains for me to pray that God may move the Muslims to recognise Mirze Ghulam Ahmad as a true son of Muhammad, who glorified his name and brought everything to the attention of the Western world, and to embrace his movement with arms of Love. And for Christians to bless him for opening their eyes to the Truth.

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JESUS—PROPHET OR GOD

by Muhammad Zafrullah Khan

DR. ABA EBAN, an eminent scholar who lectured on Hebrew, Arabic and Persian literature at Cambridge University and later served as Foreign Minister of Israel, has, in his outstanding work MY PEOPLE, summed up his view of Jesus at page 105 as follows : Jesus was a Pharisaic Jew. He had lived among the common people of Galilee and was the spokesman of their ideas. Galilee was the stronghold of a robust Jewish patriotism, which found resonance in the teaching of Jesus, insofar as they conformed with those of the ancient prophets. He never considered himself a universal prophet outside the Jewish context. It cannot even be said that he was indifferent to the external forms of religion. He meticulously kept Jewish laws, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem on Passover, ate unleavened bread and uttered a blessing when he drank wine. He was a Jew in word and deed...He declared in the Sermon on the Mount that he had not come to destroy the Law but to fulfil.

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The Rev. Dr. Don Cupit, Emmanuel College, Cambridge, an eminent Anglican theologist, affirmed in a television interview a month ago, that Jesus was wholly man, a prophet, but not God.

Rodney Hoare, in his book The Testimony of the Shroud, which is due to be published within the next few days, opines that the picture of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels is of a solid, complete human being through whom God was able to speak and act in the same way as He did through prophets and saints. He observes :

Looked at objectively, the Gospels contain plenty of evidence for Jesus having been not only a normal man of the first century, but also particularly a Jewish one. His knowledge knew very human restraints, and he was strictly first-century Jewish... It is really his powerful Jewishness which argues

most forcefully against his being a part of God. He did not address himself to God's creatures in general but predominanty to his own people. He moved in purely Jewish circles as far as possible.....His teaching was always within the context of the Jewish religion. He even regarded his life as a sacrifice for the sins of the Jewish people past, present and future, as suggested in Jewish scripture. Had he been part of God, this would have been surely ridiculous, for how could God satisfy Himself for the sins of that one race by sacrificing part of Himself in that way? The Jewishness of Jesus shone through his ministry and at times his description of Gentiles suggested second-class citizens, and though it is true that occasionally he praised the faith he found in a Samaritan or a Roman, his strong preference for Jews lingered among his disciples after his death. It took some time and a lot of persuasion before the Jerusalem Church would agree that the message of Jesus was meant for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. These points would argue for Jesus being a complete Jewish man rather than part of the Universal God. (p. 88)

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Jesus was a complete man, therefore, and in no way a part of God during his life on earth.....It is as a man that Christ is more relevant. True he was the son of God and addressed God as Father but he was also the son of Man, and made it clear that we are all sons of God (p. 95).....Muslims who believe Jesus to have been a great prophet of God, will no longer need to be offended by dogmatic Christian insistence on his divinity. (p. 118)

Jesus was the last prophet in Isreal. He was called the son of God, an expression that was in common use in scripture but was always employed metaphorically and in no single instance did it connote God. Nowhere in the Gospels or the Epistles is it said that Jesus referred to himself as God or implied that he was God. The expression, Lord, was applied to him but there is no evidence that those who made use of this expression with reference to him believed, or meant to convey, that he was God. It was used as a synonym for master.

It was long after his time that the expression son of God was transmuted into God, the Son, meaning thereby that Jesus was the second person in the Trinity. The entire concept of the Trinity was foreign to the thinking of Jesus. He always referred to himself as having been sent by God, meaning that he was a divine messenger. For instance:

This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent. (John 17:3)

I can of mine own self do nothing, as I hear I judge and my judgmeut is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. (John 5:30)

I have greater witness than that of John, for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me (John 5:36).

And the Father Himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. (John 5:37)

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Ye have not His word abiding in you: for whom He hath sent, him ye believe not. (John 5:39)

He that sent me is true. (John 8:26)

Jesus said unto them, if God were your Father, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I myself, but He sent me. (John 8:42)

They have believed that Thou didst send me. (John 17:8)

For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me...And this is the will of Him that sent me...(John 6:38-40)

It is clear, therefore, that Jesus consistently put himself forward as one who had been sent by God, that is to say, as a messenger of God. In fact, his function as a messenger of God was defined even before his birth by divine direction as set out both in the Gospel and in the Holy Quran. The angel that appeared to Mary and told her that she would bear a son whom she should name Jesus also informed her that God would give

him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob (Luke 1 : 32-33). The Quran affirms that Mary was told that God would teach Jesus the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel and would make him a messenger to the children of Israel (3 : 49-50). It is true that in Luke 1 : 32, he is called the son of the Highest and in 1 : 35, the son God ; but these expressions in Biblical idiom do not at all connote Divinity or partnership in Divinity. In Psalms, 82 : 6 we read : I have said, ye are gods ; and all of you are the children of the most High.

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In numerous instances the expression son of God is applied to prophets, to the righteous and to believers. The following are only some examples out of many :

> Israel is My son, even My first-born. (Exodus 4 : 22)
>
> Also I will make him (David) My first born, higher than the kings of the earth. (Psalms 89 : 27).
>
> He (Solomon) shall be My son, and I will be his father. (1. Chron. 22.10)
>
> Now, My son, the Lord be with thee ; and prosper thee, and build the house of Lord, thy God, as he has said of thee. (1 Chron. 22 : 11)
>
> Blessed are the peacemakers. for they shall be called the children of God. (Matt. 5 : 9)
>
> That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. (Matt. 5 : 45)
>
> But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name : Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1 : 12-13)
>
> For as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the spirit of adoption wherby we cry, Abba, Father. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we

are the children of God : and if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (Romans 8 : 14 -17)

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. (John 3 : 1)

More significant than all this is the explanation furnished by Jesus himself, which is as follows :

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father ; for which of those works do you stone me ? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not ; but for blasphemy ; and because that thou, being man, makest thyself God. (John 10 : 31-33)

Now here the crucial question was directly posed to Jesus. Did he claim to be God, the second person in the Trinity, as he subsequently came to be represented ? His answer must be accepted by all those who profess to believe in him and to follow him.

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods ? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken ; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemeth ; because I said, I am the son of God. (John 10 : 34-37)

For as much then as we are the offspring of God (Acts 17 : 29).

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This makes it quite clear that the expression son of God when applied to Jesus, by himself or by others, meant no more in his case than it means in its application to others in scripture, of which we have set out several instances above. He was son of God in that sense, but in no wise at all God, the Son, the second person in the Trinity

as is now claimed.

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It is contended, however, that in the same context Jesus had also said : I and my Father are one (John 10 : 30) and ; the Father is in me, and I in him (John 10 : 39) ; and that these affirmations lend support to the claim made on his behalf that he was not merely the son of God in the Biblical idiom, but had a relationship with God which elevated him to the Godhead and made him a partner and an associate of God on an equal footing. We shall now proceed to show that in the idiom of the Bible the expressions relied upon do not carry the matter any further and do not furnish the least evidence of the divinity of Jesus. For instance :

> At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. (John 14 : 20)
>
> That they all may be one ; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us : That the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one : and that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them as thou hast loved me. (John 17 : 21-23)
>
> He that knoweth not the Son knoweth not the Father which hath sent him. (John 5 : 23)
>
> He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life. (John 5 : 24)
>
> One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all, and in you all. (Ephesians 4 : 6)

The distinction between God and Jesus was well understood among the disciples and the early Christians, as would be appreciated from the following :

> For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ, Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. (Phillippians 3 : 3)
>
> But to us there is but one God, the Father of Whom

are all things, and we in Him ; and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things, and we by him. (1 Cor. 8 : 6)

Jesus himself brought out the distinction clearly in attributing divinity to God alone, Who was also his God, as for instance :

Go to my brethern, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father ; and to my God, and your God. (John 20 : 17)

Jesus had not the slightest hesitation in affirming the Unity of God. For instance :

One of the scribes came.. and asked him, which is the first commandment of all ? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear O Israel, the Lord, our God, is One Lord : and thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength : This is the first commandment... And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth : for there is One God ; and there is none other but He. (Mark 12 : 29-30 and 32)

God alone is immortal : the blessed and only potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords ; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach ; Whom no man hath seen, nor can see : to whom be honour and power everlasting. (1 Tim. 6 : 15-16)

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The doctrine of the Trinity necessarily imports the complete equality in all respects of the three persons of the Trinity, for if there were inequality in any respect between them that would mean the superiority of one over the other two in which case the one, or the two, that lacked equality could not be God ; the one who had superiority over the other two would be God of the universe, including the other two. Even a cursory study of the Gospels and the Epistles reveals that in respect of the attributes of which there is a record the Father is supreme and there is a disclaimer by Jesus of those attributes.

For instance, God alone is the true source of honour, as is said : How can ye believe, which receive honour one of

another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? (John 5:44) This finds support in the Quran: 'Whoso, seeks honour should realise that all honour belongs to God. (35:11)

All holiness belongs to God alone, as is said:

And, behold one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but One, that is, God: But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. (Matt. 19:16-17)

Jesus disclaimed absolute power. When Zebedee asked him to grant that her two sons may sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left hand, in his kingdom, the reply given by him was:

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To sit on my right hand, and on my left is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. (Matt. 20:23)

His knowledge was not co-extensive with the knowledge of God. Concerning the day and hour of his second coming, after setting out certain signs, he said:

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. (Mark 13:32)

The Quran affirms that God's knowledge comprehends all that is in the heavens and in the earth but that man's knowledge is limited to that much which God bestows upon him:

He knows all that is before them and all that is behind them, and they cannot compass aught of His knowledge, except that which He pleases. His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth, and the care of them wearies Him not. He is the Most High the Most Great. (2:256)

Apparently, not only Jesus lacked equality with God he also lacked equality with the third person in the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, as he said:

Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy

shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. (Matt. 12:31-32)

The Quran lays down that all prayer is to be addressed to God:

Unto Him is the true prayer. Those on whom they call beside Him, do not respond to them at all. (13:15)

Jesus had the habit of prayer. As for instance:

He withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed. (Luke 5:16)

He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. (Luke 9:28)

And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. (Matt. 21:22)

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It came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples, and he said unto them, when ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name...(Luke 11:1-2)

Thus quite rightly all his supplications and those of his disciples were addressed to God. Obviously, therefore, there was not equality between the supplicant and Him to Whom supplication was addressed. God had the power to respond to supplication and to grant it. Quite clearly Jesus lacked such power, for indeed if he had possessed that power his supplicating God would have been meaningless. Had he been the second person in the Trinity, he would have been in no need of supplication, as he would have had the power to do all that he wished. This is well illustrated in his repeated supplications in the garden of Gethsemane, when he fell on his face, and prayed, saying:

O my Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. (Matt. 26:39).

This shows that the relationship between Jesus and God was that between a righteous servant and his gracious master. 'Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt'; is a clear affirmation of the supremacy of the Divine will over the will of Jesus which was subordinate to the will of God. As he himself affirmed, he had been sent not to do his own will but to do God's will (John 6:38); which is an exact description of the relationship between God and a Prophet.

As a contrast, there is no mention of the Father ever supplicating the Son, which is clear proof that the Father is supreme and the son is subordinate to Him, as a servant is subordinate to his master.

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Assuming that there had been complete equality between the three persons of the Trinity in every respect, status, knowledge, power and all the other attributes of the Divine, this would only have led to confusion and conflict of the type of which we read in the mythologies of certain creeds, for the situation would present an insoluble dilemma. If one of them had authority to control the others, that would mean the subordination of the others to him, and thus equality would be negated. If there were no control there would be conflict. If there were complete identity of wills between all three and of everything else, there would be redundance. As the Quran has said: If there had been in the heavens and earth other gods beside God then surely both would have gone to ruin. Then glorified be God, the Lord of the Throne, above that which they ascribe to Him. He cannot be questioned concerning what He does, but they will be questioned. (21:23-24).

Jesus called the attention of his opponents to the fact that Moses had prophesied about his coming. He said:

For had ye believed Moses ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? (John 5:46-47)

It is claimed that there are several prophecies in the Torah

and other books of the Bible concerning the advent of Jesus, and that the Jews were awaiting the advent of the Messiah when Jesus began his ministry. It is those prophecies to which Jesus was seeking to draw their attention when he referred to the writings of Moses. What is significant for our present purpose is that all those prophecies had reference to the advent of a prophet and not to the advent of God in the capacity of the second person of the Trinity.

The truth of the matter clearly is that Jesus was the last prophet in Israel, a believer in Moses and all the prophets of Israel who followed after Moses. He was bound by the Mosaic law and adhered to it. It is true that he often set forth its true import in contrast with its letter, but that was the exercise of his prophetic function. He did not mean, and had no authority, to abrogate the Mosaic law or any part of it. This he made quite clear in his emphatic declaration:

> Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5 : 17-19).

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That is why he told the one who had asked what good thing he should do that he may have eternal life, to keep the commandments; by which he clearly meant the commandments of the Mosaic law.

His ministry as a prophet was confined to the children of Israel. He was the heir to the throne of David and was to reign over the house of Jacob. (Luke 1 : 32-33). His own conception of the character of his ministry was manifested

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clearly in the following incident :

Behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David ; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word, and his disciples came and besought him, saying, send her away ; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord : Yet the dogs eat out of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith : be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. (Matt. 15 : 22-28)

This account sets forth clearly and positively that Jesus was a messenger of God sent unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel and that the scope of his ministry did not extend beyond the children of Israel. The woman of Canaan is said to have worshipped him at one stage, but her worship amounted to no more than and entreaty for help, so that the expression worshipped has been used instead of beseeched. The verse could well have run : Then came she and prayed him to help her. Be that as it may, the manifestation on her part of extreme reverence for Jesus did not invest Jesus with divinity, and his response to her entreaty was even more emphatic than his first response exhibiting an extreme degree of contempt for the Gentiles. He did not consider it fitting to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs. The contempt apart, it leaves no room for speculating that his mission as a messenger could have included within its scope anyone outside the house of Israel. His yielding to her entreaties in the end was no indication that he had misconceived the scope of his mission and that now he had a better understanding of its extent. It meant only that he had been moved to compassion

by the depth and sincerity of her faith in him. His mission was a beneficent one, and even if a non-Israeli believed in him sincerely it would do him no harm, and nothing but good could proceed from it.

It is said that on another occasion he had exhorted his disciples to carry his message into all the towns and villages and to all the people, but there is nothing to indicate that by all the towns and villages and all the people he meant anything more than all the towns and villages of Israel and the whole of the Jewish people.

He clearly directed his disciples to that effect, as would appear from : These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not : but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (Matt. 10 : 5-6)

Thus, the concept of Trinity finds no support from anything that Jesus is reported to have said. It is a concept which bewilders reason, offends conscience, and affronts Divine Majesty. It is utterly inconsistent with the concept of the Godhead.

A body of distinguished Anglican theologians have described it as a myth, meaning,

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A story which is told but which is not literally true or an idea or an image which is applied to someone or something but which does not literally apply, but which invites a particular attribute in its hearers...that Jesus was God, the Son Incarnate, is not literally true, since it has no literal meaning, but it is an application to Jesus of a mythical concept whose function is analogous to that of the notion of divine sonship ascribed in the ancient world to a king. [1]

The writers of this book are convinced that another major theological development is called for in this last part of the twentieth century. The need arises from growing knowledge of Christian origins, and ivolves a recognition that Jesus was (as he is presented in Acts

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(1) The Myth of God Incarnate, Preface, p. ix.

2 : 22) 'a man approved by God' for a special role within the divine purpose, and that the later conception of him as God Incarnate, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, living in human life, is a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for us. This recognition is called for in the interests of truth ; but it also has increasingly important practical implication for our relationship to the peoples of the other great world religions.[1]

God is not subject to the contingencies of birth and death. He is Ever-living and neither begets, nor is begotten. The Quran sets forth a true concept of Him which does not in any way diminish, confine, or limit Him. For instance :

He is God, the Single ; God the Self-Existing and Besought of all. He begets not, nor is He begotton ; and there is none like unto Him. (112 : 2-5).

Put thy trust in the One Who is Ever-living and is the source of life, Who dies not, and glorify Him with His praise. (25 : 59)

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The Quran utterly and emphatically rejects the concept of the Trinity. For instance :

They allege : The Gracious One has taken unto Himself a son. Assuredly, you have uttered a monostrous thing ! The heavens might well nigh burst thereat, and the earth cleave asunder, and the mountains fall down in pieces, because they ascribe a son to the Gracious One ; whereas it becomes not the Gracious One to take unto Himself a son. There is no one in the heavens and the earth but he shall come to the Gracious One as a bondman. (19 : 89-94)

All praise belongs to God, Who has sent down the Book to His servant, free from all distortion, full of truth and guidance, that it may give warning of a grievous chastisement proceeding from Him, and that it may give the believers who work righteousness the glad tidings that they shall have a good

1. Ibid, p. 178.

reward which they shall enjoy forever. And that it may warn those who say: God has taken unto Himself a son. They have no knowledge whatever concerning it, nor had their fathers. Grievous is the assertion that they make. They only utter a falsehood. (18 : 2-6).

We sent no Messenger before thee but We directed him: There is no God but I; so worship Me alone. But they say: The Gracious One has taken to Himself a son. Holy is He. Those whom they so designate are only His honoured servants. They utter not a word more than He directs, and they only carry out His commands. He knows what lies ahead of them and what is left behind them, and they intercede not except only he whose intercession He permits, and they tremble with fear of Him. Whosoever of them should say: I am a god beside Him; We shall requite him with hell. Thus do We requite the wrongdoers. (21 : 26-30).

Keep in mind, when God will ask Jesus, son of Mary: Didst thou say to the people: Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah? And he will answer: Holy art Thou. It behoves me not to have said that to which I have no right. Had I said it, Thou wouldst surely have known it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy mind. It is only Thou Who possessest full knowledge of all that is hidden. I said naught to them except that which Thou didst command me, that is: Worship God, my Lord and your Lord. I watched over them as long as I was present among them, but since Thou didst cause me to die, Thou hast been the One to watch over them. Indeed Thou dost watch over all things. If Thou decide to punish them they are Thy servants; and if Thou forgive them, then surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise. (5 : 117-119).

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People of the Book! exceed not the bounds in the matter of your religion, and say not of God anything but the truth. Indeed, the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was but a Messenger

of God and the fulfilment of glad tidings which He conveyed to Mary and a mercy from Him. So believe in God and His Messengers and say not : There are three gods. Desist, it will be the better for you. Indeed, God is the only One God. His Holiness brooks not that He should have a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Sufficient is God as a Guardian. Surely, the Messiah would never disdain to be accounted a servant of God, nor would the angels who are close to Cod. Those who disdain to worship Him and consider themselves above it will He gather all together before Himself. (4 : 172-173)

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Those certainly are disbelievers who say : God is none but the Messiah, son of Mary ; whereas the Messiah himself taught : Children of Israel, worship God Who is my Lord and your Lord. Surely God has forbidden heaven to him who associates partners with God, and the Fire will be his resort. The wrong-doers shall have no helpers. Those certainly are disbelievers who say : God is the third of three. There is no one worthy of worship but the One God. If they desist not from that which they say, a grievous chastisement shall surely afflict those of them that disbelieve. Will they not then turn to God and beg His forgiveness, seeing that God is Most Forgiving. Ever Merciful. (5 : 73-75).

The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a Messenger ; many Messengers have passed away before him. His mother was a paragon of truth and they both were in need of and ate food. Observe how We explain the Signs for their benefit, then observe how they are led away. Ask them : Do you worship beside God that which has no power to do you harm or good ? It is God Who is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. Admonish them : People of the Book, exceed not the bounds in the matter of your religion unjustly, nor follow the vain desires of a people who themselves went astray before and caused many others to go astray, and who strayed away from the right path. (5 : 76-78)

The subject of God and His attributes, through which alone a true concept of Him may be formed, is vast and limitless. The Quran sets forth a wealth of instruction concerning divine attributes and their operation. It is not necessary for our present purpose to embark upon a detailed discussion of the subject. By way of illustration, however, attention might be drawn to the following passage which should be studied and pondered with great care:

God is He beside Whom there is no god, the Sovereign, the Most Holy, the Source of Peace, the Bestower of Security, the Protector, the Mighty, the Subduer, the Exalted. Holy is God far above that which they associate with Him. He is God, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner; His are the most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. He is the Mighty, the Wise. (59 : 23-25).

Man is desirous of righteous progeny to help him in his old age, to carry on his name and the family after his death, and to bring him posthumous honour. God is Ever-living, Self-subsisting and Self-sustaining. All that is in heaven and earth belongs to Him, obeys Him and glorifies Him. What need has He of a son? What can a son do for Him that He cannot do Himself? To attribute a son to Him, as a partner in the Godhead, would be to offer the gravest affront to Him.

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The Deliverence of Jesus from the Cross
Quranic and Islamic Evidence

By Abdus Salam Madsen

(Continued from the March 1979 issue of the Review of Religions)

The natural death of Jesus Christ

From the relevant references we shall here exclude the two that deal with the crucifixion event, and shall deal with them later. (They are 3 : 55-56 and 4 : 158-159).

There are also other Quranic verses that prove to the satisfaction of any reasonable unbiassed person that Jesus lived a full life and died an honourable death at a good old age after having completed his mission as the Jewish Messiah.

Keep in mind when God will say to Jesus, son of Mary: Didst thou say to people : Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah ? — and he will answer : Holy art Thou, I could never say that to which I had no right. If I had said it, Thou wouldst have surely known it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy mind. It is only Thou Who art the Knower of hidden things. I said nothing to them except that which Thou didst command me : Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. I was a witness over them as long as I remained among them, but since Thou didst cause me to die, Thou hast been the Watcher over them, and Thou art Witness over all things. (5 : 117-118).

Jesus said : I am a servant of Allah. He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet. And He has made me blessed wheresoever I may be and has enjoined on me prayer and almsgiving so long as I live. He has made me dutiful toward my mother, and He has not made me haughty

and unblessed. Peace was on me the day I was born, and peace there shall be on me the day I shall die, and the day I shall be raised up to life again. (19 : 31-34).

Of these verses the first proves : (1) The corruption of Christian doctrine took place after the death of Jesus. (2) If Jesus were still alive, Christianity would still exist in its pure form. (3) Jesus will not appear a second time in this world, as he would then become aware of the mentioned corruption and could not, therefore, plead ignorance in front of God's judgment seat.

The second verse equally proves that Jesus must have died and could not exist in heaven with his physical body. (1) If he was still alive, he would have to give alms in heaven, but who would need alms there ? (2) If he would descend again to the earth alive, he would have to follow the Jewish prescriptions on both prayer and almsgiving — and could not be a follower of the Islamic Law. (3) Did his mother accompany him in his ascension ? How could he otherwise behave like a dutiful son towards her ?

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What happened at the event of the crucifixion ?

We will deal now in some detail with the verses that refer to the event that took place at the crucifixion and see what actually happened according to the simple and clear statement of the Quran. In doing this we deem it advisable to put the two texts parallel to each other as one explains the other :

The Jews planned, and Allah is the Best of planners. When Allah said: O Jesus, I will cause thee to die a natural death and will exalt thee to Myself and will clear thee from the charges of those who disbelieve and will place those who follow thee

And their saying : We did kill the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, whereas they slew him not nor killed him on the cross, but he was made to appear to them as dead. Those who differ therein are certainly in doubt about it. They have no knowledge thereof, but only follow conjec-

above those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection.
(3 : 55-56)

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ture, and they certainly did not kill him. On the contrary, Allah exalted him to Himself, and Allah is Mighty and Wise.
(4 : 158-159)

By reading the two versions together it becomes clear that the plan (*makr*) of the Jews was to kill Jesus and thereby disprove his claim to Messiahship, because he who was hanged on a tree was cursed by God (Deut 21 : 23). But God also had a plan or a counter-plan (*makr*) and that was to save Jesus from the accursed death and exalt him in rank and position.

It is clear that God's plan could not be a supernatural event like casting the likeness of Jesus on someone else and raising him bodily to heaven ; nor to let him die and then resurrect him and raise him bodily to heaven. *makr* (plan) means to change something to the opposite of that which is designed by the opponent by a stratagem or device or other means. Thus *makr* operates through means adopted in this world for achieving a purpose, and no miracle can be called a *makr*. The second reference also ends with a reference to God's Wisdom. What Wisdom—Divine or otherwise—could there be in cheating the Jews, the Romans and the disciples alike by substituting another person for Jesus ?

The expression used for natural death is *tawaffa*. Without any exception it means : to take possession of the soul ; to cause somebody to die after completing his or her term. The Quran contains as many as 22 (twenty-two) clear references where *tawaffa* has been used in that connotation. We have excluded therefrom the references where Jesus is mentioned as the object of *tawaffa*, because they are under discussion. There are two separate verses (6 : 61 and 39 : 42) about the taking possession of the soul during sleep. But that does not detract from the connotation that we have mentioned, as a simple quote from the last-mentioned verse will prove :

Allah takes away (*yatawaffa*) the souls of human beings

at the time of their death ; and during their sleep of those that are not yet dead. Then He retains those against whom He has decreed death and sends back the others till an appointed term.

Tawaffa is never used for taking possession of the body. It is the soul that is taken—either permanently (at death) or ad interim (in sleep). So *Mutawwafika* means as ibn 'Abbas reported ; *Mumituka* (I will cause thee to die) Bukhari.

The phrase *Rafiuka* means I will exalt thee. *Raf'a* is used twice about Jesus. Once it is used about Idris (Enoch) 19 : 58 : And we exalted him to a lofty station. This is a normal usage of the Quran. Muhammad Asad says in his Commentary (p. 177) that when God is the subject, *Raf'a* means invariably : to exalt in rank. Also Mufradat says about Jesus that his *Raf'a* is to be understood min haithi-ttashrif : by way of bestowing honour on him.

Ibn Khatib says in his "modern" Egyptian Commentary (The Clearest of Commentaries) what we have translated here. And those who assert that Jesus is dead point to the word of the Exalted God: Every soul shall taste of death, and Jesus, peace be upon him, belonged to the human species for which death is ordained. Some people presume that he is dead and lies buried in a locality which they mention by name, and maybe it is India, and God—may He be exalted—knows best what He has said and done.

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Those who allege that Jesus was not put on the cross should look up in a Quranic Concordance, where they will find that the word *salaba* is used at five (5) places about this special death-punishment (namely 12 : 42, 7 : 126, 20 : 50 and 5 : 33). At two places it is used (*sulb, aslab*) about spine, back-bone, namely 86 : 8 and 4 :24. So in accordance with this Mufradat confirms that *salaba* means : to break the spine or back-bone or to bring out the marrow of the bone (by breaking it). So what the verse states : *ma qataluhu wama salabuhu* means that they

did not kill him (either by strangling or stoning) or by a completion of the well-known death-punishment (in so far as they did not break his bones).

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But he appeared to them like one killed, says the verse. Now *shubbiha* and its derivatives are found in the Quran at 12 (twelve) places, invariably meaning "to be like or similar" to something or someone. But as it is here used in the passive, it can only refer, according to Arabic grammar, to a well-known (implied) subject, i.e. in the context it can only refer to Jesus and not to some one else who is neither mentioned here nor elsewhere in the Quran.

To sum up: the Jews plotted to disprove the Messiahship of Jesus by killing him on the cross, but God counter-acted their plot on their own plane by saving him from the shameful death on the cross, so that he only appeared to them as dead. But in fact he survived and lived to a ripe old age as promised in the word Mutawwafika which has a double meaning: not only to cause to die (a natural death), but also—as interprets ibn Khatib: Mustawwaff ajalaka: I intend to complete your life-term.

I have so far kept strictly within the boundaries of the evidence furnished by the Quran. But the attentive listener will have noticed that I made a passing reference to Sahih al-Bukhari who quoted Ibn Abbas for the interpretation of *Mutawwafika* as meaning *Mumituka* (I shall cause you to die). But this is not a saying of the Holy Prophet; it is only an interpretation of an expression used in the Quran.

In order not to leave Hadith (sayings of the Holy Prophet) totally untouched I would like to quote the three which are brought forward to show that Tradition also regards Jesus as dead. But first I would like to explain why there are only three traditions affirming the death of Jesus. The answer is simple: because the Quran is so clear and un-ambiguous, that there was no need of great elaboration of this self-evident point. These three are:

1. If Moses and Jesus had been alive, they would have had no choice but to follow me. (Kathir Vol. II, p. 245 & al-Yawaqit wal-Jawahir 2nd Part, p. 24).

2. Verily, Jesus son of Mary, lived for 120 years, and I (Muhammad) see myself as only entering upon the beginnings of the sixties. (Kanz al-'Ummal' Part 6, p. 120)

3. During his spiritual ascent to heaven (Mi'raj), the Prophet saw Jesus together with John in the second heaven. (Bukhari, Part 2, Chapter on al-Isra : the Night Journey).

The first two are very clear in their evidence, while the third may need some explanation. The point to be deduced from that is that Jesus and John were together in the same state, so either both are dead or both are living It is admitted by all that John is dead, so Jesus must also have died.

After the death of Muhammad, peace be on him, some of his disciples, among them 'Umar ibn al-Khattab doubted that he was really dead. However, Abu Bakr, after having paid his last respects to his beloved master. ascended the pulpit in the Mosque and recited the verse of the Quran :

> Muhammad is only a Messenger. All Messengers before him have passed away. If he dies or is killed, will you then turn upon your heels? (3 : 145)

Abu Bakr added ;

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> If any of you worshipped Muhammad, let him know that Muhammad is dead, but if you worship God, you should know that God is Ever - Living and does not die. (Chapter on the letters of the Prophet to Kisra (Chosroes) and Qaisar (Caesar).

This was the first instance of *Ijma'* or concensus of the Community, because the response of the disciples is well-known and reported in the same hadith : By God, it was as if this verse was not revealed by Allah before Abu Bakr recited it, and every one received it from him, and I did not hear any one who did not recite it. No one objected that Jesus or any other prophet

had not died. Every one received it and accepted it and confirmed it! How then can any person deny that which has been confirmed by that august assembly?

It is not within the scope of my address to set out an account of the post crucifixion life of Jesus. That will be done by others. But to end my brief address in a fitting manner I shall quote a well-known verse from Sura al-Mu'minun (23:51)

> And We made the Son of Mary and his mother a sign and gave them shelter on a pleasant plateau with springs of running water.

Thus after having been delivered from his enemies and their persecutions—just as Noah, Moses and Aaron had earlier been delivered from their enemies—Jesus like them was given the opportunity to complete his mission in another country, of which this verse gives a striking description.

Our last word is that all praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and peace be upon all His Messengers.

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Printed at the Nusrat Art Press, by Malik Basharat Ahmad and published by M. Masud Ahmad B. A. Rabwah, Pakistan, from the office of the Review of Religions, Darulsadar, Rabwah.